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## PRESS RELEASE

### High Country Council of Governments Present Awards at Annual Banquet

*The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Banquet was a time to celebrate service, dedication, consensus, relationships, and cooperation among local governments and stakeholders. During the event, local elected officials, government employees, and board members were recognized for exemplary leadership and service.*

(Boone, NC) – On September 8, 2017, High Country Council of Governments held its annual awards banquet to recognize outstanding achievements and contributions by elected officials, local government employees, and advisory committee members.

High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) is a planning and development agency serving local governments in Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties.

Award winners were selected by elected and appointed officials from the seven-county region.

HCCOG Executive Director, Shane Fox, presented the first four awards.

Town of Boone Mayor Dr. Rennie Brantz was recognized as this year's Outstanding Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) Member by his fellow board members. This award recognizes an individual's contribution to the region as a whole, and their knowledge of the region's transportation needs.

Dr. Brantz was selected as this year's honoree for working effectively with fellow board members to support the efforts of the High Country RPO to continually enhance and improve our region's transportation network. Dr. Brantz is actively engaged with management, town staff, and key stakeholders when new transportation projects are being considered for the State Transportation Improvement Program.

Watauga County resident Chris Edwards was selected by fellow board members as this year's Outstanding Workforce Development Board Member. Edwards joined the board in early 2016 where he has made a noteworthy impact by serving as chair of the NCWorks Committee, and serving on the Executive Committee. To learn more about his role as a board member, Edwards took the initiative to attend a 3-day state conference to learn more about the workforce development system.

Edwards has been an active participant in several meetings focused on creating the Healthcare Career Pathway for the High Country region – a pathway outside his own wheelhouse of hospitality management.

Watauga County resident Mary Goodnight was recognized as this year's Outstanding Staff Member at High Country Council of Governments. This award recognizes an individual's willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty, contributing to a positive work environment, and promoting a healthy image of the COG in our region.

Goodnight has been employed at the COG since September 2015, and has extensive financial experience having worked in the financial field for over 17 years. Goodnight has been dedicated to her community and has been a tremendous asset and volunteer over the years to local organizations like OASIS and the Children's Council.

Goodnight is well-liked and respected by her co-workers and is known for her willingness to always help. Her extensive financial knowledge has helped to transform the COG's Finance Department in a short time.

West Jefferson Town Manager Brantley Price was recognized by the region's managers/administrators, and local elected officials, as this year's Outstanding Local Government Manager in the High Country region.

The award acknowledges the contributions a manager has made to local government through his/her professionalism, leadership, and accomplishments as manager or chief administrator.

Price has been an integral part of West Jefferson's revitalization efforts and streetscape enhancements over the years. He has secured numerous grant funding for improvement projects, all while successfully managing budgets to effectively execute purchases, expenses, and other funding in a fiscally minded fashion. Price's experience, transparency, honesty, and open door policy makes the employees feel taken care of.

Executive Board Chairwoman and Banner Elk Mayor, Brenda Lyerly, presented the next two awards.

Seven Devils' Town Council Member Brad Lambert was selected as this year's Outstanding Local Elected Official in the High Country Region. This award honors outstanding service and leadership to the community.

Before becoming a resident of the town he currently serves, Lambert had a distinguished career in the U.S. Navy, and retired from military service in 2002. For 5 years he served as Town Manager, and shortly after retirement, began service as a Town Council member in 2011.

Under Lambert's leadership, the town's first website was established. He was instrumental in working with town staff, FEMA, and local contractors to rebuild roads and infrastructure after 2 devastating hurricanes hit the town in 2004. Lambert has made a tremendous effort to unify a workforce to create and promote a positive work environment. He provides unending volunteer service to the town by serving as Chair of the Public Works Committee, Member of the Public Safety Committee, and Volunteer Firefighter – 1<sup>st</sup> Responder.

The High Country Council of Governments' Executive Board chose Rick Miller, Mayor of Beech Mountain, as their Outstanding Executive Board Member. This award honors service and effort in promoting cooperation among local governments in the region and the state.

Miller established himself in his community as a local business owner. He was first elected to office in December of 1987, and his service has spanned over 15 years – with 8 of those years as Mayor through Board appointment. Notable achievements include: involvement with the first Town Hall, addressing sales tax distribution methods through the state's judicial system, creating the first municipal 911 operational system in the county, spearheading the town's Streetscape project that continues to build walkable connectivity to businesses and recreational areas, completion of the town's 20-year Comprehensive Plan, establishment of a Municipal Fire Department in cooperation with the local Volunteer Fire Department, and completion of the town's new Water Treatment Plan facility.

Miller makes himself available as an ambassador to the community through regional and state-level involvement to represent local interests. As a civil servant, he has excelled in his community by promoting excellence in government. Miller has served on the Executive Board for High Country Council of Governments for 12 years.

HCCOG would like to congratulate all award recipients and thank them for their dedicated service to High Country citizens.

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